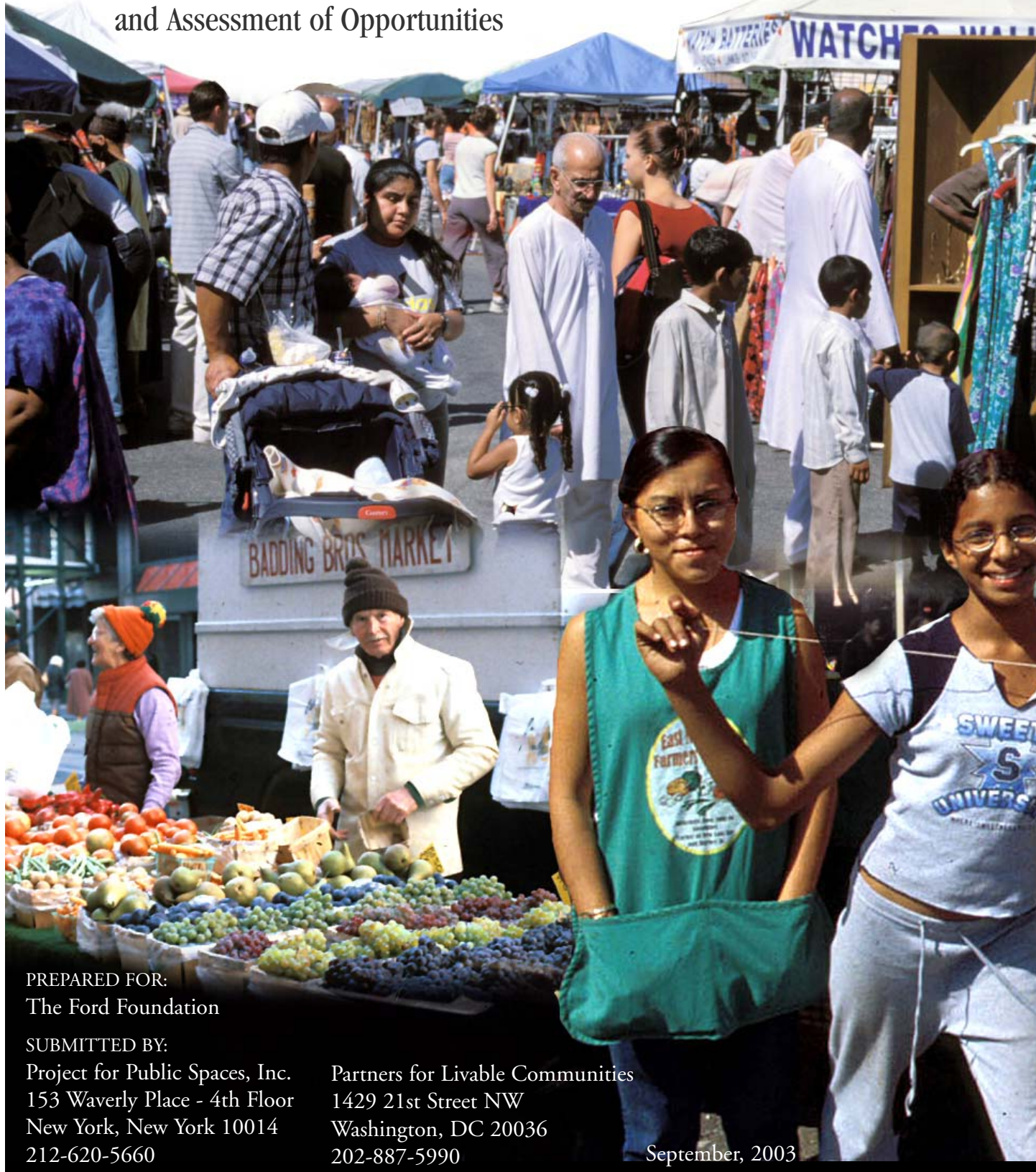


# Public Markets as a Vehicle for Social Integration and Upward Mobility

Phase I Report: An Overview of Existing Programs  
and Assessment of Opportunities



PREPARED FOR:  
The Ford Foundation

SUBMITTED BY:  
Project for Public Spaces, Inc.  
153 Waverly Place - 4th Floor  
New York, New York 10014  
212-620-5660

Partners for Livable Communities  
1429 21st Street NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-887-5990

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# Introduction

## Urban revitalization...economic development...progress.

The billions of dollars in public and private investment justified by these catchwords – and by the jobs that presumably go with them – have produced pitifully little in all too many American cities. The financial rewards of the “big project” – whether it be highway construction, an office complex, or a convention center – have tended to produce more menial jobs than meaningful ones. Moreover, they have done serious damage to the urban fabric – its streets, parks, and public spaces – which, in turn, leads to further stagnation and even downward spiral.

Urban revitalization practitioners – whether from government, the private sector, or from community-based organizations – are beginning to recognize that new definitions of “urban revitalization” and “economic development” are needed today. These strategies understand the importance of public spaces that connect everything together, and that public gathering places are inextricably related to the potential for economic opportunity and upward mobility of lower-income people.

One of the most obvious, but perhaps least understood, methods of enhancing social integration in public spaces and encouraging upward mobility are public markets. Increasingly, community leaders and local government see public markets as a means of addressing some of the more vexing problems of our cities: the need to bring people of different ethnic groups and incomes together; the need to make inviting and safe public spaces; the need to reinvigorate low- and moderate-income neighborhoods and to support small-scale economic activity; the need to provide fresh, high-quality produce to inner-city residents; and the need to protect open space and preserve farming around cities.

This report summarizes the results of a six-month research effort where Project for Public Spaces, Inc. (PPS) in association with Partners for Livable Communities (Partners), took a fresh look at the issue of public markets which serve low- and moderate-income, ethnically diverse communities. This research allowed us to address specifically how public markets enhance the potential for social integration in public spaces – attracting diverse income levels, ages, and ethnicities – and thereby create a sustainable vehicle for upward mobility and individual empowerment for low-income communities. For the purposes of this study, therefore, we defined a successful market as: one that succeeds in both its economic and social aspects and can sustain both over the long term.



The research began with a scan survey of over 100 markets. From this list, eight were selected for detailed case study research, which included customer and vendor surveys, interviews with market management, and, when possible, a focus group of vendors, customers, and other involved parties.



While it was important to better understand the current dynamics of public markets, it is perhaps more important to look to the future to create a new paradigm and approach for public spaces, markets, social integration and economic mobility – and to identify opportunities and potential implementation strategies. Four regional forums were conducted (in Los Angeles, Memphis, New York, and Washington) to address future opportunities for development of markets. Finally, PPS's 5th International Public Market Conference, held in New York in November 2002 and partly sponsored by the Ford Foundation, provided an opportunity to raise many of the issues identified during the research and discuss them with other market operators and community development experts. Indeed, many of the conclusions of this report are derived from presentations and discussions at conference sessions.

It should be noted that a companion report, with additional case studies funded under a grant from the Kellogg Foundation, will supplement this report later in the spring. That research will specifically address public markets developed by community-based food system advocates.

## What is a Public Market?

The term public market has changed in meaning over time and still differs from place to place. In the United States, a public market has traditionally been defined as a municipally owned and operated building where vendors sell fresh food from open stalls. While some public markets still match this definition, public markets now come in many shapes and settings, offer a wide range of different products, and are owned and operated by various types of organizations, not just city governments. Besides the old-fashioned public market buildings, public markets also embrace many farmers, craft, and even some antique, markets. Public market districts that incorporate the elements of these types of markets, along with more traditional forms of food retailing, are among the best-loved places in the world.

At their most basic, markets include vendors or merchants who meet at the same location on a regular basis under the aegis of a sponsoring entity that has legal and

financial responsibility to oversee operations and, sometimes, structures or facilities to house the market activity. What distinguish public markets from other types of related retail activity are the following three characteristics:

Most important, public markets must have public goals. Public goals give a defined civic purpose to the market activity. Typically, these goals have included attracting shoppers to a downtown or neighborhood commercial district, providing affordable retailing opportunities to small businesses, preserving farming or farmland in the region, activating an underused public space, or displacing an undesirable use of a public space.

Second, public markets are located in and/or create a public space in the community. This is the visible aspect of a market – the creation of an inviting, safe, and lively place that attracts a wide range of people. As an effective place where people mix, public markets can become the heart and soul of a community, its common ground, a place where people interact easily, and a setting where other community activities take place.

Finally, public markets are made up of locally owned, independent businesses operated by their owners, unlike the ubiquitous franchises that dominate retailing today. This helps account for the local flavor of public markets and the uniqueness of the shopping experience. Public markets consciously seek out local entrepreneurs and businesses and therefore offer an alternative to common retail practices.

## Methodology

The core of this research was based on an analysis of eight existing public markets to understand how they serve low and moderate income communities with regard to the specific issues of social integration and upward mobility. Because this is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of all potential aspects of these issues, PPS used a case study approach which involved:

- Interviews with market management.
- Collecting market budget and background information.
- Surveys of customers, with a goal of 100 per market. In all, 671 customer surveys were completed.
- Surveys of market vendors, with a goal of 50% of all vendors. In all, 157 vendor surveys were completed.
- Activity mapping at selected markets, recording the types and volumes of customers at different times of the day.

- When possible, a focus group of market vendors, customers, and other involved parties.

At the outset, specific criteria for selecting sites (geographic/ethnic diversity, local partner to help coordinate, etc.) were developed. PPS made an extensive effort to identify potential examples through internet research, requesting suggestions from a variety of list serves, and interviews with market management in different parts of the country. It was from this master list (included in the appendices) that we selected the eight case studies.





# Challenges of Public Markets in Low-Income Communities

**Public markets are making a comeback.** Cities that preserved their public markets, from Seattle to Cleveland to Buffalo to Philadelphia, have brought new life and vitality to them. New public market halls have been developed from Lynchburg, VA to Little Rock, AR to Toledo, OH to Asheville, NC. Thousands of farmers markets and craft markets have sprung up in cities throughout the country, attracting people back to the public spaces of their downtown and neighborhoods.

Yet, despite their potential, many markets – especially markets that serve low-income communities – have failed or are experiencing problems with sustainability. Southland Farmers’ Market Association in Los Angeles found that 30% of new farmers markets failed in California, and those established in low-income areas were even more likely to fail. They also found great disparity in gross revenues in markets in low-income communities versus middle-income communities: a South Central LA market grosses \$200,000 a year (and declining) compared with over \$3.7 million (and increasing) in Santa Monica.

As noted, PPS defined a successful market for the purposes of this study as one that succeeds in both its economic and social aspects and can sustain both over the long term. Needless to say, creating a public market that meets our definition of success is a considerable task in a low-income neighborhood - exactly where such a market is most needed, but also where it is most difficult to achieve. Several formidable challenges are clear.

## Challenge 1 Economic Failure

As with any commercial enterprise, simple economic failure is always a possibility. Inadequate capitalization, poor understanding of the customer and the market, and poor management can plague any start-up retail enterprise. However, a market that is conceived and funded as a public market can experience economic failure for several other reasons as well, related to the good intentions of the sponsors and to the use of subsidy funds.

For example, due to the presence of public or philanthropic partners that seek to “make a statement” or create a symbol of renewal as one of their objectives, the market may incur unnecessarily high operating costs by having funding for a more elaborate and expensive-to-operate facility than it can support over the long term.

The Haitian Market in Miami was a handsome structure architecturally, but the operations of the market were never seriously considered and the project went bankrupt. Failures of this kind can occur even in open-air markets, however. For example, a foundation-supported series of markets in low-income housing projects in Philadelphia failed as soon as foundation support was withdrawn – there was virtually no other source of income and the sponsoring organization, a food security group, could not sustain them.

Over-dependence on unreliable volunteers is another common shortcoming in an enterprise identified as a “good cause,” which substitutes well-intentioned amateurs for the professional administration or market management that is really needed. The Troost Market in Kansas City, located on the street which has historically been the dividing line between black and white Kansas City, MO, has been hailed as a success and is now in its fourth season. However, it relies heavily on volunteers who are getting increasingly difficult to recruit.

A poor location is another plague that seems more common in public markets than in those that depend on the entrepreneurial instincts of a private operator, who would choose (and pay for) the “100% corner” where the market can succeed. More likely with a public market is the “in-kind” contribution of a readily available, city-owned lot, or the vacant highway right-of-way under the interstate, which is chosen regardless of its suitability for the economic success of the market. This is obviously more likely to happen if government, philanthropic, or underfunded nonprofits are in decision making roles.

## Challenge 2

### Failure as a “Public” Market

An opposite concern is failure of the public aspect of the market. In this case, the market may be an economic success, but ends up with no overt public purpose (i.e. being part of a coordinated neighborhood economic development plan), other than what any business might contribute through the creation of jobs and tax revenue. Privately operated flea markets, including one case study presented in this report, fall into this category. Even though these markets can be hugely profitable for management, there is minimal public benefit to the surrounding community.

## Challenge 3

### Failure to Produce Wider Effects in its Neighborhood

And last, the market can fail to produce the “spin-off” benefits that multiply its effects by stimulating activity in the larger physical and economic environment. It might succeed or fail as an economic enterprise; either way has little larger impact.

Perhaps the market is in an isolated location where it has neither a good retail location nor a sense of place. The Mercado La Paloma, in South Central Los Angeles, is experiencing a difficult start-up process for the market, in part because of a poor location and over-spending on the market facility, which forced the market to obtain a loan which must now be repaid.

Or perhaps a market has a good retail location, but nothing more. And especially, perhaps it is not part of a broader strategy that has anticipated and provided for nearby activity, whether economic, civic, or recreational and that knits it more closely to its community. Usually a symptom of this problem is the lack of partners within the broader community.

To avoid any of these failures – whether partial or total – is a major challenge of the low-income neighborhood. “Success” as we have defined it is a tricky and subtle result that does not happen by accident.



# Overview of Case Studies

Eight case studies were selected for this research, and each is described briefly in this section. In order to provide a broad look at various types of public markets, case studies were selected to represent the following criteria:

- Markets that have started up in the past ten years, compared with established, older markets;
- Markets that have failed and closed, or failed to live up to expectations, compared with those that have sustained themselves economically;
- Markets that are operated by non-profits compared with those operated privately
- Markets that are located within low-income neighborhoods, serving primarily that neighborhood, compared with markets that are located such that they serve both low-and middle- income communities;
- Markets that have actively pursued emerging trends (such as helping develop home-based businesses, working with new immigrants, micro-lending, and community-based production facilities) compared with markets that do not have such programs.

## CASE STUDY OVERVIEW

MARKET	LOCATION	SPONSOR/OWNER	TYPE OF MARKET	YEAR EST.
Berkeley Flea Market	Berkeley, CA	Community Services United	open-air flea market	1977
Chinatown Night Market Fair	San Francisco, CA	Chinatown Neighborhood Association	open-air night market	1999
East New York Farms!	Brooklyn, NY	ENY Planning Group	open-air farmers market	1999
El Faro Swap Meet	Los Angeles, CA	S&S Partnership	indoor/outdoor flea market	1989
El Mercado - Norris Square	Philadelphia, PA	Norris Square Civic Association	indoor market hall	1997
Findlay Market	Cincinnati, OH	Corporation for Findlay Market/ City of Cincinnati	indoor market hall with adjacent farmers market	1852
RFK Stadium Farmers Market	Washington, DC	DC Federation of Farmers & Consumers	open-air farmers market with adjacent flea market	1980
VEND at McArthur Park	Los Angeles, CA	Institute for Urban Research & Development	open-air vending district	1999



# Berkeley Flea Market

BERKELEY, CA



The Berkeley Flea Market is one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse public spaces in the Bay Area. Every weekend, 150-plus vendors and thousands of customers and hangers-on turn one of the Ashby BART station's parking lots into a homegrown, international bazaar. This 30-year-old market draws vendors and customers from the East Bay and beyond to sell, shop, and socialize. The product mix ranges from new and used clothing; to African, Latin American and Asian art and handicrafts; to books, music, and electronics; to even some plain old junk. Prepared-food vendors provide cheap, authentic meals from West Africa or the Caribbean, and drummers and other acoustic musicians further enhance the friendly, eclectic atmosphere.

New and long-time vendors alike describe selling at the market as being like part of a "big family" that tends to teach, learn from, and look out for one another. This familial atmosphere also draws a majority of its customers back to the market, with many of them coming down every weekend, whether to shop or just socialize with friends and neighbors.

The market's roots date back to the late 1960's, when BART claimed eminent domain over residential properties for a proposed transit station. Nearby residents asserting their rights to the space started using the newly vacant land to sell things and an informal market soon sprang up. When BART began construction on the station and tried to remove the vendors, the vendors, teamed with Community Services United (CSU), a coalition of seven local non-profits, sued BART to win the right to sell at that location. They won the battle and the market has been operating there ever since, but they are required to lease the land from BART. Thirty years later, it is still the only public market operating in a BART station.

While many of the vendors don't make much money and see selling as more of a pastime, enough vendors pay stall fees each week for the market to generate a profit. CSU, which has managed the market since its inception, rolls the proceeds into its member organizations, helping provide everything from health care to housing advice to the community. The market has outlasted other Bay Area flea markets and demand for selling space remains high. While the market has minor issues with security and vendor gripes, its accessibility, abundant parking, subsidy-free existence, and long-standing reputation as a fun, diverse, safe place to hang out, and maybe even shop, ensures its long-term success.





# Chinatown Night Market Fair

## SAN FRANCISCO, CA

After the destruction of the Embarcadero Freeway in the 1987 earthquake, the economy in San Francisco's Chinatown faltered; the freeway had provided easy access to the businesses and restaurants crucial to Chinatown's economy. The growth of Asian communities in other Bay Area cities compounded matters, making Chinatown less and less of a destination.

In the late 1990's, community leaders in Chinatown — inspired by the traditional night markets of Hong Kong, Singapore, and China — hit on the idea of a local night market. Seen as a way to draw people back into Chinatown, especially at night, organizers added a new twist to the Far East model: live entertainment, including lion dancing, Chinese opera singing, and karaoke contests.

With secure funding from the city and a central location in Portsmouth Square, a block-sized city park, the Chinatown Neighborhood Association piloted the Night Market for six weeks in the fall of 1999. The market was an instant success. Asians, especially the younger generations, flocked to the market every Saturday night, drawn by its festival atmosphere, cultural offerings, and great deals. Local restaurants claimed a 50% increase in business on market nights, and businesses extended their hours and profits by selling at the market. Three years later, as the market has expanded to a six-month season (April to November), vendors continue to offer up Chinese products, from gift items to electronics and entertainment, to fish balls and bubble tea, to an average 2,500 customers. While the majority of vendors and customers are Asian,



increasing numbers of local and European tourists are visiting the market. In addition to the economic benefits, the night market provides the Bay Area with a free weekly showcase of Chinese culture and entertainment, leading supporters to dub it “the poor man’s night club.” The market fosters this atmosphere by affording new and newly emigrated artists a place to demonstrate their talents. In addition to the singers and dancers on stage, the market reserves 25% of its space for enterprising Chinese artists, including musicians, calligraphers, and fortune tellers, and charges them no stall fees.

The Chinatown Night Market is subsidized by the city and county with an annual grant of about \$250,000, although these same entities also receive sales tax receipts and parking fees from the market. This subsidy is the greatest issue facing the market today; the market is challenged by high operating costs (due to the cost of setting up and dismantling lights, stalls and stage every week) and is seeking to expand in size and frequency beyond its current six-month, one-night incarnation, to increase income. Management remains committed to the future of the market, based on its role in the revitalization of Chinatown, high demand by vendors to sell there, and its social and cultural attributes.





# East New York Farms!

## BROOKLYN, NY

Early Saturday mornings from May to November, a line of senior citizens snakes around the perimeter of a garbage-strewn vacant lot in East New York, Brooklyn. As the line quickly grows from 10 to 25, then to 50, a small group of urban gardeners, neighborhood entrepreneurs, youth interns, and upstate farmers transform the lot into a clean, fresh, open-air farmers market. By the time the gates are opened at 9:30, the line of mostly Russian, African American and Latino seniors waiting to buy fresh produce at the market has grown to over 100.

This high demand for its offerings is one of the signs of success for the East New York Farmers Market. Like many low-income neighborhoods, East New York has limited access to fresh produce; few large grocery stores operate in the area, and what produce there is often is over-priced and of poor quality. In the late 90's, local community organizers realized that the neighborhood's abundance of urban gardeners could help address this issue of food security. A coalition of community organizations was formed into the ENY Planning Group to plan, implement and manage a farmers market in East New York.



Three years later, the market is going strong, with 3-4 upstate farmers, 6-8 urban gardeners and an equal number of local entrepreneurs. While demand remains high for the farmers' produce, and they do well financially, the gardeners often have difficulties growing enough produce to meet demand. As a result, many of them have branched out to value-added products and prepared foods. The "crafters," as the non-produce vendors are called, have a harder time, but for the opposite reason – demand for their products is low and few folks come to the market with extra cash to buy gift items and handicrafts. In fact, few of ENY's customers come to the market looking to spend cash at all: about 80% of sales at the market are through WIC and senior coupons via the Farmers Market Nutrition Program.



While the coupon programs have positively affected the neighborhood's access to fresh produce, the lack of cash sales at the market is one of its greatest challenges. The coupons are not available throughout the entire growing season and not all of the vendors have the ability to accept them. Additionally, the market draws a distinctly local customer base; few customers come from outside the surrounding neighborhood. The market is open-air and in a highly visible location, making it easy for passersby to spot, but its small size and lack of available parking hinder its ability to draw customers from a wider area.

Another challenge the market faces is maintaining its large subsidy. The market has run primarily on grants thus far, incorporating youth internships, entrepreneurial training, gardening workshops and technical advice into the market. As East New York Farms! grows, its goals are to rely incrementally more on vendor fees and local support and to give the market a higher profile. ENY plans to build a farm shed structure on the lot in 2003, which should give the market better visibility and a greater degree of permanence.



# El Faro Swap Meet

## LOS ANGELES, CA

Located in a sprawling former factory in South Central LA, El Faro, “the Lighthouse,” is a massive indoor/outdoor swap meet with authentic Mexican food, music, and a vast array of clothing, auto parts, and “productos tradicionales”. During the week, people come mainly to shop, but on weekends, El Faro turns into a major social center for its overwhelmingly Latino customers. A huge mariachi band sets up under a tree to play, and families pour in to eat, dance, listen to the music, socialize and, of course, shop the day away.

The previous tenant of the space, a furniture manufacturer, moved out in 1988 and a new tenant soon came in with the idea of starting a swap meet there. Though he got the market off the ground, the organizer failed to arrange a successful lease structure and ultimately asked the property owners to take over. Using private investment dollars, they added some buildings, bought additional property for parking lots, arranged the leases, and have been running the market at a profit ever since.

Over the last 12 years, El Faro has maintained a strong identity at its location, as it effectively replicates the atmosphere of similar markets in Mexico. A nearby transit stop and bus lines, and over 500 parking spaces ensure a steady stream of customers from Latino communities around LA. While there is not much other retail nearby, the very successful Alameda Swap Meet sits across the street, and the two businesses seem to feed off one another’s customers.

Economically speaking, El Faro is an extremely stable market, with around 200 vendors, 700-1,000 jobs, and profitable operations. The vast majority of vendors are “full time,” but many work other jobs while a family member runs the business. It has a low vendor attrition rate, and when businesses do decide to leave, they often “sell” their space for a hefty sum. As testament to the success of El Faro and its unique sense of place, the owner simply says, “When the economy slows, we don’t.”





# El Mercado at Norris Square

PHILADELPHIA, PA



El Mercado sits at the crossroads of three distinct neighborhoods in a low-income, mostly Latino area of North Philadelphia. The market's current facility is a newly renovated, 5,000 sq. ft. former warehouse at the south end of seven acres of vacant lots. Prior to opening at the current site, the market operated in a nearby park, and then in front of the current market building, before it was renovated. The building has good visibility in the neighborhood, plenty of parking, and a large vending area out front that is being readied for the future.



The idea for the market was hatched in 1997 and was seen as a way to incubate local businesses. Sponsored by the local CDC, which successfully developed housing but had never ventured into a commercial undertaking, the early markets were more like "fairs" held in the summer in the park and featured imported products from Puerto Rico that were unavailable in local supermarkets. The idea of the market was gradually integrated into the psyche of the community and has slowly, but steadily grown.



The market has been launched in no small part because of the efforts of the project manager, who has doggedly pursued the goals in spite of delays, obstacles, and the bureaucratic inertia involved in getting public funds and approvals. Funding for the project required that vendors come from the neighborhood, and significant time was spent recruiting. For instance, the bakery is being operated by a local halfway house and is part of a training and re-entry program for former substance abusers. Many of the food vendors are recent immigrants from El Salvador, Mexico, or Puerto Rico.

Many of them have other jobs, and the market is being used as a way to generate secondary income.

Initial grants were also obtained to cover the market's operating expenses and keep the rents at a minimal level. The underlying funding for the market is quite substantial and has given the CDC enough staying power to see the market through its critical early years. It is ultimately intended to pay for itself operationally.

# Findlay Market

## CINCINNATI, OH

The market is becoming not only an important business, but also a vital community gathering place; it is not unusual to see many families sitting together, chatting and enjoying the experience. The surveys overwhelmingly indicated that people were grateful for a “place to go to” that was welcoming and not wholly commercial in the usual sense.

Findlay Market, located in the “Over the Rhine” neighborhood of Cincinnati, is one of the oldest commercial institutions in the city and the last of its historic markets (there were nine at one time). The market is comprised of two long sheds with a central head house. The sheds, originally open-sided, have been enclosed. The sheds sit in the middle of a purposely wide street and are ringed with shops and storefronts, some with living spaces above. The market is currently undergoing a major renovation to both the sheds and surrounding streetscape and storefronts.



Originally the market was in the center of a middle-class Eastern European community. Today, that neighborhood is primarily African American and is one of the poorest and least densely populated in the city. Recent riots in the city took place in and around in the market district and, though the market itself was not damaged physically, commercial activity in the area has suffered. In the larger “Over the Rhine” neighborhood there are many vacant storefronts and wide-spread evidence of disinvestment. Threatened as it may be, the market survives, serving as an anchor for the neighborhood, but remaining a veritable island of goodwill and camaraderie.

The market is an extremely important symbol of life and hope for the neighborhood; the city’s recent contribution of millions of dollars for the market’s renovation is evidence of this. It is still primarily a fresh-food market, and while some vendors show up all week, most of the business occurs on Saturdays. It is not unusual to see farmers and temporary vendors selling on the streets and sidewalks around the market on Saturday.



The market is owned by the city, which is preparing to turn over management of the market to a non-profit agency at the end of 2003, when the renovations are complete. There is also a strong Friends of the Market group that helps with advocacy, publicity, and fundraising.

The market, run through the city, has an estimated annual operating budget of \$450,000. Vendor fees are modest and farmers can rent spaces for \$105 for six months, while enclosed spaces in the shed rent for \$4103 per year. The market operates at a loss and is subsidized by the city.

Vendors come from the tri-state area of Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. Most of the farmers and vendors are white, as are most of the customers, the majority of whom come from outside the neighborhood. Approximately 17% of customers are African American and from the neighborhood. The number of vendors has decreased steadily over the years, and is down to 14 in the sheds in 2002.

There is cause for optimism, though. A consortium of local churches and social service agencies is meeting to discuss market issues and new management and a renovated facility will poise the market well for the future. In order for the market to move forward, it must take on the dual challenge of the market itself, as well as the revitalization of the surrounding neighborhood.





# RFK Stadium Farmers Market

## WASHINGTON, DC

In the late 70's, Marian Burros, a food writer for the Washington Post, challenged Washington, DC to start a farmers market. Other major cities had them, she surmised, and DC residents deserved equal access to fresh produce. Efforts to organize such a market were also prompted by supermarket closings and major disinvestment in Northeast and Southeast DC. Ultimately, the DC Commission of Food, Nutrition and Health hired the University of DC Cooperative Extension Service to start the market to address local food security issues. Additionally, small local farmers were faring poorly selling to wholesalers at the time, and the market was designed to provide an alternative outlet for them.

By 1980, the market was up and running in a parking lot of RFK Stadium. Shielded from the weather by an elevated line of the DC Metro, with access to 3,000 parking spaces and close to major area roadways, customers have the ability to drive in and load their trunks up with fresh produce for the week. Farmers benefit substantially from this arrangement as well, and though the market runs only a few days a week, many of them are able to make a living off of it. The one major drawback of the market's location is that vendors must move or close down whenever stadium events require them to. This past year (2002), the market was displaced from May-August, as its space was taken up by an auto-racing circuit. In normal years, the market relocates an average of 8-10 times, mostly for home football games.

Nevertheless, thousands of customers, primarily African American and of low- to moderate-income come to the market from nearby neighborhoods, as well as from the greater Washington area, drawn by the fresh produce, convenient parking, adjacent flea market, and social life of the market. Many reunions and rekindling of friendships have occurred at RFK, and farmers and customers often swap stories of rural vs. urban lives. While a large proportion of customers are from an older generation (as are many of the farmers), and are experienced in buying and preparing fresh vegetables, substantial amounts of younger customers are drawn by WIC coupons available through FMNP.

Today, while farmer numbers have declined to about 15 from a peak of 27 in 1987, the RFK Stadium Farmers Market is in a stable position and continues successfully to address the same issues it has for over twenty years.



# VEND at McArthur Park

## LOS ANGELES, CA

Just south of downtown LA, at the corner of 7th and Alvarado, 12 vendors hawk tamales, drinks, and ice cream from a neat row of wooden carts lined up under the palm trees. Long believed to be one of the most dangerous corners in LA, this entrance to McArthur Park has been home to LA's first legalized vending district for the past three years. Half a block down the street, Mama's Hot Tamales Café, with its café, bookstore, art gallery, and commercial kitchen, serves as a home base for the vendors, as well as for much of the neighborhood.

Organized in response to the high amount of illegal vending (as well as drug dealing) that was occurring in the McArthur Park area, the VEND program has met with varying degrees of success. When it was first taking shape under the auspices of the Episcopal Church and The Institute for Urban Research & Development, many residents and business owners were opposed to it, thinking that the district would foster more illegal vending. That opposition has waned as the benefits of the program – a safer park entrance, more attractive streetscape, new café for the neighborhood, legal business opportunities for the mainly Central American immigrant vendors, and loads of delicious tamales – have become apparent.

The challenges VEND faces, though, are considerable. Though the vending location is fairly visible, foot traffic at the entrance to the park is light compared to across the street. Some of the businesses there have expressed interest in having a non-competitive vendor in front of their stores, but the vending ordinance under which the district was developed does not allow this. Incredibly, the ordinance limits the



vendors' mobility almost completely, preventing them from even crossing the street to a better location. As a result, sales are extremely slow. (On the day we visited, a Saturday, there were not actually enough customers to conduct a survey.) Furthermore, vendors have never paid rent for their carts or use of the commercial kitchen, a practice which arguably undermines their ability to develop thriving businesses. While there are a few small success stories, the majority of vendors seem to be scraping by, despite their subsidized businesses. Meanwhile, the organization as a whole is heavily subsidized and in danger of losing much of its funding.



To its credit, VEND is working on many of these issues. It has strong, stable partnerships and the support of much of the community, and seems to be on the verge of an upswing. It is currently partnering with other neighborhoods and L.A. County Metro to develop better vending locations; a district in Echo Park is slated to open later this year. Once vendor business is beefed up, organizers plan to start charging rent. IURD and VEND are also working to amend the city ordinance to make it more amenable to vendors. Finally, management is looking to expand business at the café through catering and book and art sales to help defray operating costs.



# Key Research Questions & Findings

In light of the challenges that face public markets in low-income communities, it is intriguing to review the findings on the eight widely differing markets selected for in-depth research by this project. PPS started with four key research questions. These were:

- How do public markets enhance the potential for social integration in public spaces?
- How do public markets create a vehicle for upward mobility and individual empowerment for low-income people?
- How can public markets sustain their operations with minimal subsidy?
- How can public markets be viewed as a more important component of a broader civic agenda?

Despite the diversity of the markets, some interesting generalizations can be drawn using these questions. Moreover, the regional forums and public market conference provided an opportunity to begin to address further the fourth question.

## Social Integration How Do Public Markets Enhance the Potential for Social Integration in Public Spaces?



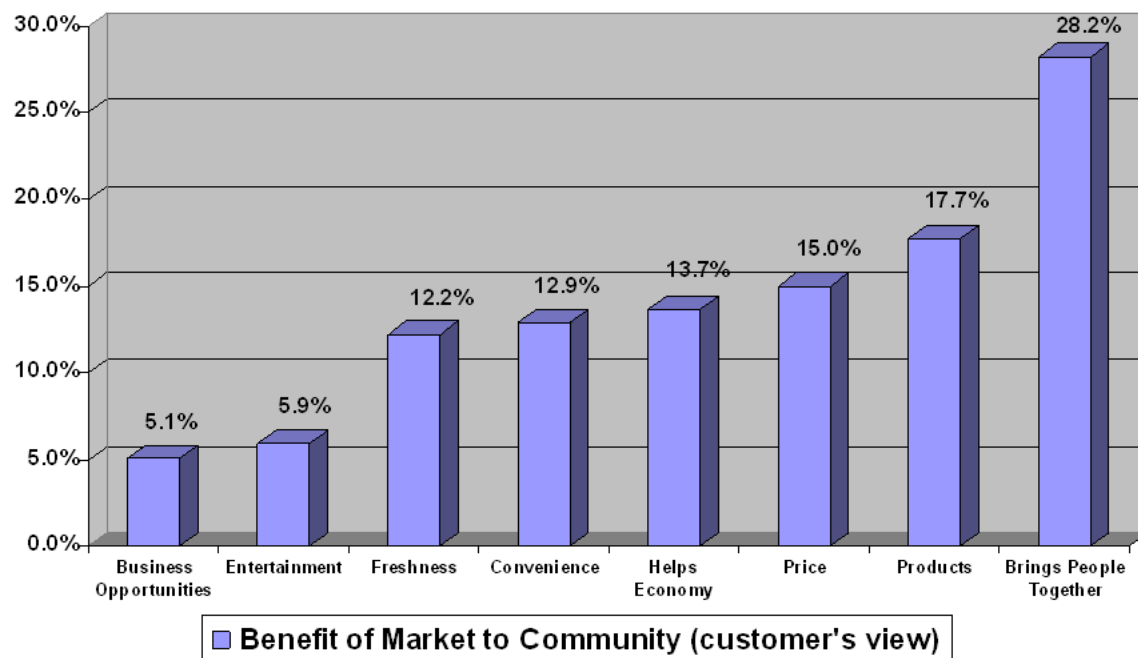
The data appear to show that social integration is achieved by a market that has “something extra.” The market must have an attractor beyond its role as a place to buy goods. For example, the response to the question, “With whom do you usually visit the market,” when broken down by market, showed that “family” and “friends” were the highest-ranking of the four choices; “family” was first for five of the markets; “friends” was the top response for the Chinatown Night Market and the second top response for the Berkeley Flea Market, both primarily non-food markets. Obviously the selection of and arrangements made with friends are a social act requiring some planning. These last two markets function as social places where people come to “hang out” as well as to shop, and the fact that they are flea markets is possibly part of their attraction, a hypothesis supported by other data as well.

## Why Customers Come to Markets and Benefits to Communities

Why do customers come to markets? The customer survey asked respondents this in an open-ended question. The results, after PPS organized the hundreds of responses into several main categories, were quite surprising: While products are key, place and people outpace even price.<sup>1</sup> For all the markets, the first and perhaps self-evident choice – “products” at 68% – was followed by some not-so-obvious choices: “place” at 37% and “people” at 27%, both in front of “price”, which came in at 25%. “Convenience,” “community,” “tradition,” and “other” lagged further behind.



Customers’ response to the question, “What is the greatest benefit of the market to the community?” – another open-ended question – tended to point in a similar direction: “Brings people together” ranked as the highest response at 28.2%, well above second-place “products” at 17.7%, and third-place “price” at 15%. “Helping the local economy” ranked fourth at 13.7% and, interestingly, “business opportunities” last at 5.1%.



<sup>1</sup> "People" included responses such as "meet people", "diversity", and "sense of community". "Place" included responses such as "atmosphere", entertainment, "fun" and "culture." "Economics" included comments such as "good for business", "making money", and "boosts economy." "Products" included items related to their variety, freshness, quality, diversity, uniqueness. Price related specifically value and bargains. "Tradition" included comments like "been coming for a long time", "been selling for a long time."



To test “price”, “place”, and “product” directly against one another, the results for these three variables were broken out by market. While “product” ranked highest for all markets except one, ranging from 47.5% to 85.9%, “place” was a close second in all but two. In the case of the Chinatown Night Market, “place” topped all others at 53.5%. In only two of the markets, East New York and El Mercado, did “place” rank below “price,” and at both of those markets, “product” ratings were very high at 77.9% and 70.2%, respectively, seemingly compensating for the deficiency of place. In both cases, the markets were less successful places – one is a renovated industrial building adjacent to seven acres of vacant lots, the other a vacant lot itself, surrounded by a chain link fence.

## Diversity at Markets

In terms of the ethnic diversity of customers and vendors, it appears that all markets, regardless of their overall degree of diversity, have, and benefit from having, a dominant ethnic identity. For example, the Chinatown Night Market’s vendors are 100% Asian, and its customers 76.5% Asian. At El Faro, vendors are 85.7% Latino, and customers 96.9% Latino. These are among the least diverse markets, but both are large and appear to thrive due in large part to their very strong ethnic identity. The Berkeley Flea Market, while the most diverse market ethnically, nonetheless has a substantial African American representation (vendors, 39.4%; customers 49.9%), giving it a clear ethnic identity as well.

Even when markets are not ethnically diverse, they are almost always diverse in terms of age of customers. The greatest number of customers came from the 18-24, 25-34, 35-44 and 45-54 age groups (18.4%, 23.6%, 17.9% and 15.7%, respectively), with substantial numbers of over-55 year olds (17.7%). Children are grossly under-represented in our surveys, but counts done at four markets suggest that between 20-25% of market-goers are under 18. The markets with the highest number of over-55 year olds were all farmers markets (East New York, Findlay, and RFK), reflecting perhaps their greater familiarity with preparing fresh foods. The best example of this trend was the East New York Farmers Market, which led all markets in over-65 customers, with 28%.



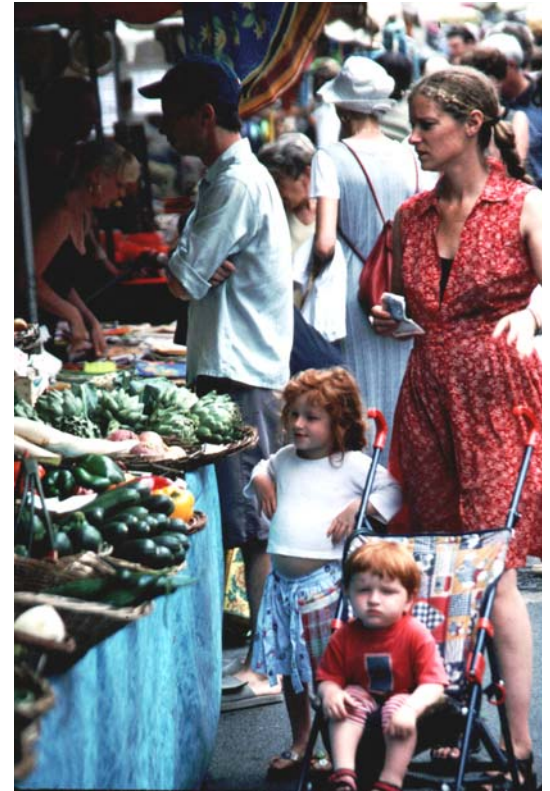
Younger folks (under-25), on the other hand, tended to frequent primarily non-food markets, such as the Chinatown Night

Market, El Faro, and the Berkeley Flea Market. The Night Market, perhaps the most vibrant of all the markets, with singing, dancing, and a youth-oriented product mix (i.e. cell phones, CD's, Anime), led the way with 55% of its customers under the age of 25 and 75% under 35. (While the youthful age of our surveyors may have distorted these numbers somewhat, counts conducted at the market suggest a similar under-35 number of 64%.)

Age diversity among vendors broke down along lines similar to the customer age diversity: middle-aged and older vendors tended to cluster at the "food-oriented" markets and younger vendors at the more "product-oriented" markets. The most prominent examples were the Chinatown Night Market, with 59% of its vendors under the age of 35 and the RFK Stadium Farmers Market, with 44% of its vendors over the age of 55.

The gender diversity of customers was fairly evenly distributed among the markets, with slightly more females (52%) than males (48%) overall. Markets with significantly higher proportions of females included East New York (71%), El Mercado (60%) and Findlay Market (59%). While all three of these markets are primarily food markets, suggesting a breakdown along traditional gender roles (i.e. women doing the food shopping and cooking), RFK, also a farmers market, was only 42% female. What is more likely is a correlation to the widespread use of federal Farmers Market Nutrition Program WIC coupons at these markets. El Mercado had a 48.9% WIC coupon usage rate and, while this rate was not calculated at East New York, organizers suggest a similar, if not higher, number of coupon-users there.

(The only markets that had significantly higher numbers of male customers were El Faro (70%) and RFK (58%). The El Faro number is contradicted by our counts at the market, which show a slightly higher number of females, suggesting perhaps that our surveyors were biased towards selecting males for the survey.)



Vendor gender diversity was also split almost evenly among the eight markets at 52% male and 48% female, with high numbers of female vendors at East New York (83.3%) and VEND (75%) and high numbers of male vendors at RFK (80%) and Chinatown (67%). Again, this shows that markets serve as a vehicle to start businesses equally for men and women.

## Upward Mobility

### How Do Public Markets Create a Vehicle of Upward Mobility and Individual Empowerment for Low-Income People?

The markets selected for this study were ones where there were a high proportion of ethnic vendors: 82.9% are non-Caucasian, demonstrating at the very least that immigrants and members of minority groups can take advantage of the public markets if they have the opportunity. In a striking example, 92% of vendors at the Chinatown Night Market were Asian immigrants. The largest ethnic group represented at the markets was Asian/Pacific Islander, at 40.4%; Latinos were also well represented, at 23.3%. 17.8% of vendors were African American, and Middle Easterners made up 0.7% of the total.

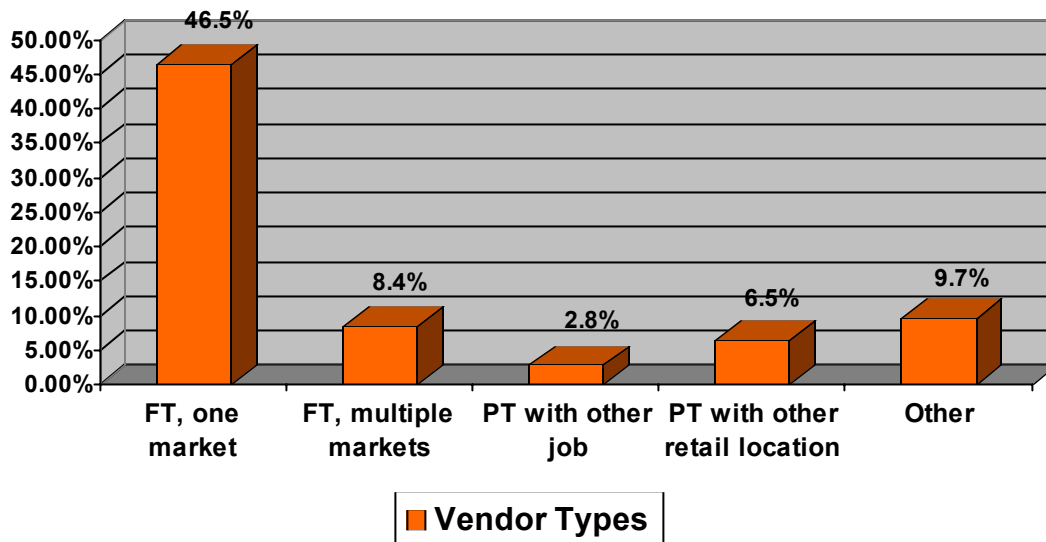
### Types of Vendors: from “Casual” to “Serious”

Vendors were asked to identify themselves by “type of vendor.” Forty-seven percent, by far the largest portion, identified themselves as “full-time at this market,” and another eight percent identified themselves as “full-time at multiple markets.” El Faro Swap Meet, Findlay Market and the RFK Stadium Farmers Market, the three oldest (and all multiple-day) markets, had a much higher percentage of full-time vendors (87.5%, 46.7%, and 55.6%, respectively) than the newer markets. Overall, twenty-eight percent of vendors identified themselves as “part-time with other jobs,” and 9.7% as “other”.

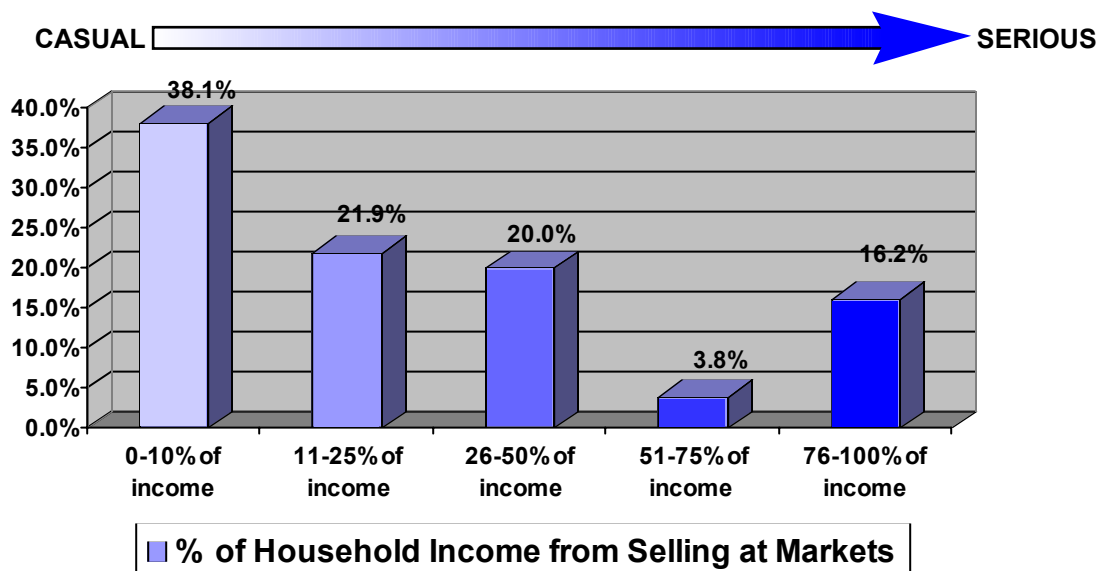


Even though many vendors identified themselves as “full-time at this market,” many of them are not reaping large financial rewards. Some 38.1% said that less than 10% of their household family income came from the market; 21.9% said it was between 11% and 25% of income; and 20% said between 25 and 50%. However, 16.2% said that it constituted 76-100% of their income.



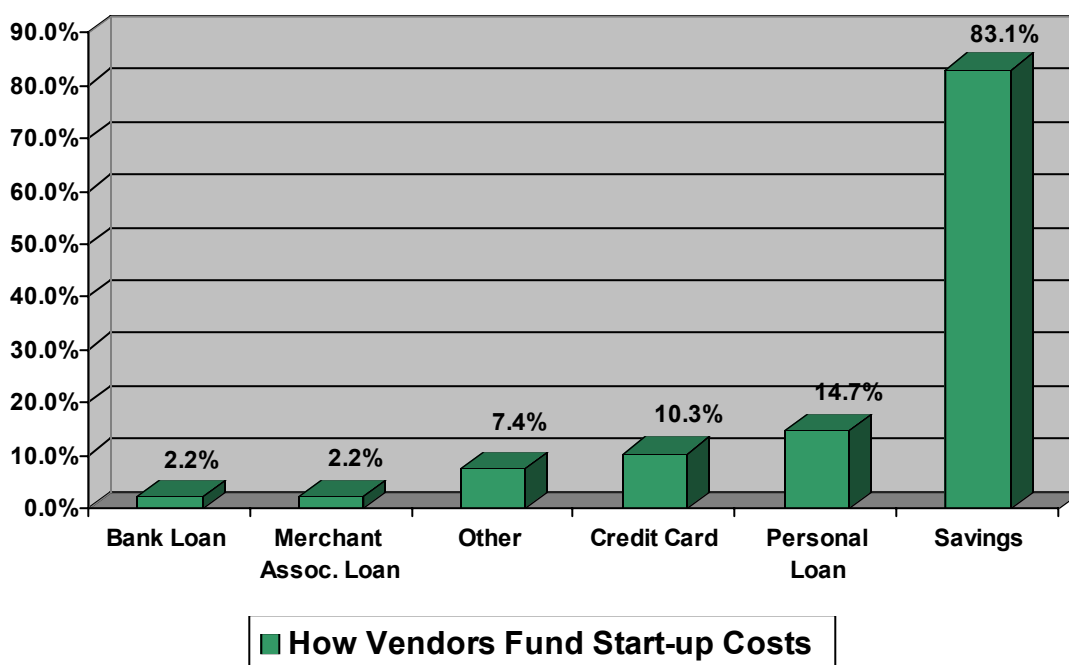


Thus vendors can range from ones we call “casual” to “serious.” Casual vendors enjoy selling at the market, often don’t expect to earn a lot of money, but have other goals, perhaps more social, in mind. This type of vendor gravitates to open-air markets where operating costs are lower. Serious vendors, by contrast, depend on the market for a major portion of their income, or have a full-time business which is closely related to the market (i.e., the market stall helps promote the permanent business location.) These vendors are more often found at well-established markets, where there is a greater likelihood of profitable, multiple-day operations.

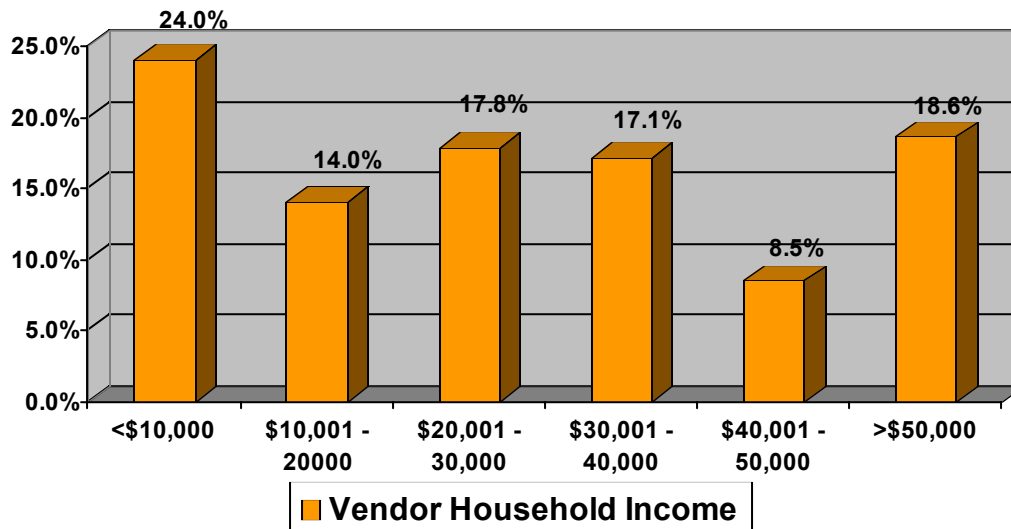


## Start-Up Costs and Financing for Market Vendors

One of the most interesting findings of the research was that by far the largest proportion of vendors – 83.1% – financed the start-up costs of their business from their own savings. This was likely possible because those costs were so low to begin with: 28% had start-up costs between \$101 and \$500, and 54% used less than \$1,000. Public-market vending may well have among the lowest barriers to entry of any employment available to low-income people. This, coupled with the difficulties that immigrants and ethnic minorities face in procuring bank loans, helps explain the mere 2.2% of vendors who named “bank loans” as their source of start-up funds, as well as the 2.2% of start-up costs that came from merchant association loans.



Vendors' incomes ranged from under \$10,000 (24%) to over \$50,000 (18.6%). Interestingly, while the percentage of vendors falling into the four income categories between these two were lower than either of these two extremes, one, the second-highest category of \$40-50,000, had the lowest frequency by a good bit (8.5%), showing a considerable dip. The same pattern was found in the data on the percentage of vendors' income from selling at the market. What could this pattern mean? One possibility is that there is a “take-off” point somewhere in the vicinity of \$40,000, where it becomes apparent whether or not the vendor's income expectations will be realized. If they are, those vendors probably move into the highest and considerably larger income category (over \$50,000) where the proportion of house-



hold income earned from selling at markets also rises into the 76-100% category. However, if it becomes apparent that income will not meet expectations, the dip in the pattern suggests that vendors drop out of their business at that point.

In terms of family employment, 46.1% of vendors employ other family members at the market, suggesting the importance of the market in these families to overall household income. Interestingly, the likelihood of vendor family employment rises from 33.3% for vendors with an annual income of less than \$10,000 to 81.8% for vendors with an income of \$40,000-50,000. This trend suggests that the more successful vendors are ones that have family members employed at their businesses.

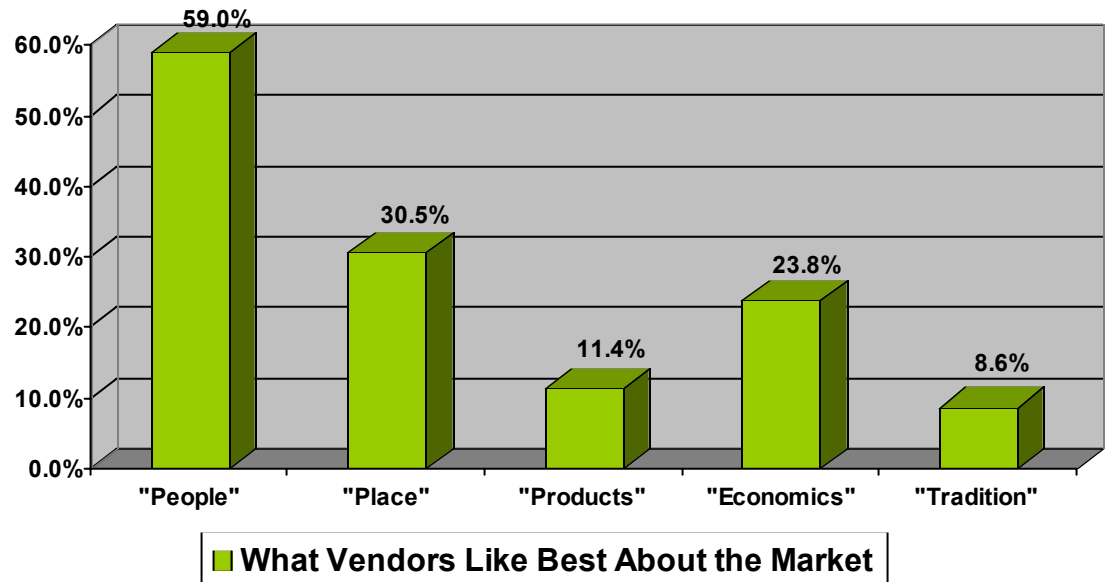
## Benefits of Markets: The Vendor Perspective

In an open-ended question, vendors were asked to describe what they like best about the market. The responses were then grouped by the researchers into five general categories in order to better understand them. The largest percentage of the vendors – 59% – said “people” was what they liked best about the market. This category included responses such as “meet people,” “diversity,” and “sense of community.” “Place” was second at 30.5%, a category that included responses such as “atmosphere,” “entertainment,” “fun” and “culture.” Combined, these are, in fact, a major reason why “casual” vendors continue to sell at markets, adding to the camaraderie among vendors and customers that acts as a support system for vendor startup. Part-timers with other jobs ranked “people” higher (66%) than any other vendors did, and higher than any other reasons. The next highest reason for this group of vendors was “economics,” at 28%. Even though they are not making a lot of money, these vendors clearly enjoy most the social aspect of selling at markets.





"Economics" ("good for business," "making money," and "boosts economy") was in third place overall, at 23.8%. Again, it appears that it is more than pure economic opportunity that attracts vendors to the market. "Products" ("variety," "freshness," "quality," "diversity," and "uniqueness") was lower, at 11.4%; obviously this is a feature of markets more important to customers than to vendors. "Tradition" ("been coming for a long time," "been selling for a long time") was the lowest, at 8.6% overall, but notable because of the 21.4% of vendors at Findlay Market, the oldest market by far at 151 years, who cited it.



To get a better sense of how successful a place a market is, it is useful to compare the "place" rankings of both customers and vendors at the same market. The customers at the Chinatown Night Market, for example, gave "place" a higher ranking than all the other markets did (53.5%) and its vendors ranked the market second highest among all markets for "place," at 35%. At Findlay Market, Berkeley Flea Market, and El Faro customers and vendors ranked "place" second, at close to 50% each. [The exception to this was at Berkeley, where a relatively weak "place" ranking by the vendors of 17.2% was superseded by their ranking of "people," at 76%.] Generally, though, the high rankings of "place" from both customers and vendors at these markets correlate with their size and success. Both Berkeley and El Faro are profitable markets, while Chinatown and Findlay are the next largest and also have relatively high volumes of sales. It appears then, that they have achieved a kind of economic and social critical mass.

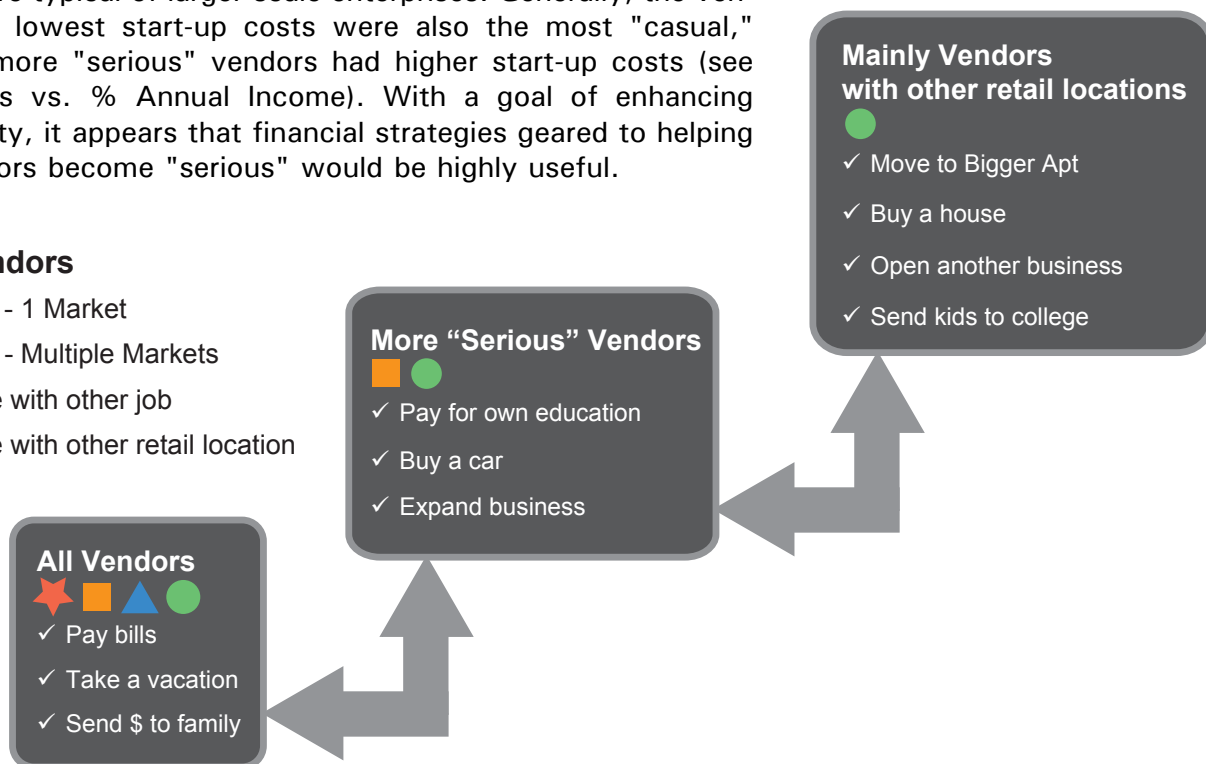
## Upward Mobility of Market Vendors

To get a handle on the degree of upward mobility of individual vendors that the market provides, a series of indicators were developed. Vendors were asked, "Has being a market vendor allowed you to..." (Check all that apply). By far the most frequent response, at 39.2%, was "pay rent/bills." The next most frequent response which, at 20.6% was tied with "other," was "take a vacation," followed by "send money to family" (19.8%); "buy a car" (17.6%); "buy a house" (16.8%); "expand my business" (12.2%); "open/purchase another business" (9.9%); "send kids to college" (11.5%); "pay for own education" (9.9%); "save/have supplemental income" (6.9%); and "move to a bigger apartment/house" (6.9%).

In correlating this data with "type of vendor," it was found that all vendors used the income for the top three purposes - "pay rent/bills," "take a vacation," and "send money to family." Those deemed "more serious" ("full-time at one market" and "part-time with another retail location") most often checked "pay for own education," "buy a car," and "expand business," whereas it was mainly those vendors with other retail locations who checked "move to a bigger apartment," "buy a house," "open another business," and "send kids to college." The implications of this are significant. As noted, most vendors are able to start their business from personal savings and do not require (or, at least, are not receiving) financial assistance more typical of larger-scale enterprises. Generally, the vendors with the lowest start-up costs were also the most "casual," whereas the more "serious" vendors had higher start-up costs (see Start-Up Costs vs. % Annual Income). With a goal of enhancing upward mobility, it appears that financial strategies geared to helping "casual" vendors become "serious" would be highly useful.

### Types of Vendors

- ★ Full time - 1 Market
- Full time - Multiple Markets
- ▲ Part time with other job
- Part time with other retail location



## SUSTAINABILITY

### How Can Public Markets Sustain Their Operations with Minimal Subsidy?

#### Financial Expectations of Vendors

To answer the last and pivotal research question, one has to consider the financial expectations of vendors. This varies, with casual vendors having rather low expectations compared with serious vendors. However, both types of vendors can survive in a market because customers are shopping at multiple vendors. Over 60% of vendors reported that their average sale was less than \$10, but over 60% of customers said that they spent \$21 or more at the market that day.

#### Financial Expectations of Market Operators: Sustainability of Markets

The financial expectation of market operators must also be considered. Through management interviews, information about the markets' operating budgets was obtained, as well as perceptions about the future. Several markets operating with subsidy said that sustainability was their major challenge in the future if they are to continue. By and large, markets that are operating profitably or at break-even level are not concerned about their future ability to keep the doors open.

The operating budgets and amount of subsidy varies greatly among the markets studied. At one extreme is VEND at MacArthur Park, where no rent has been charged to vendors since the program started three years ago. While this has been an intentional strategy in order to develop the first legal vending district in Los Angeles, one of the side effects is that the vendors have extremely low expectations for their businesses. Compounding the situation, the location chosen does not have much foot traffic; one of the keys to future sustainability of the vending program is to find better vending locations so that rent can finally be charged. At the other extreme is El Faro, a privately operated and enormous "swap meet" in South Central Los Angeles, where vendors pay \$900 a month on average to be part of a vital and busy market. In between these two extremes are markets that are relatively new (Norris Square, East New York, Chinatown) or recently renovated (Findlay) that are trying to find ways to reduce subsidies.

The subsidy is only part of the situation, however. For example, the Chinatown Night Market receives a grant from the city and county for \$200,000, but at least that amount returns to the city in the form of sales tax (now over 9%) and parking fees generated by a city-owned garage, otherwise underutilized. The market is also in the position to expand to a year-round market, possibly two days a week, which

will generate additional income. Findlay Market, at \$300,000, is also heavily subsidized, but the market is under renovation and will be shortly turned over to a non-profit operating entity that will be more entrepreneurial. Nonetheless, the \$300,000 subsidy amount of the Findlay Market must be a tempting target to City budget cutters in hard times.

It is interesting to compare these three subsidized markets to the two completely unsubsidized markets: El Faro, privately operated, and the Berkeley Flea Market, which like all the other markets in the survey, is operated by a non-profit or public entity. These two markets are much larger than the other case studies, suggesting that once the break-even point is reached, it becomes possible to grow to the point of market equilibrium, where supply can meet demand. Another interesting point of comparison between the subsidized and unsubsidized markets is that the two unsubsidized markets are fleas markets, not food markets. The RFK Stadium Farmers Market, though primarily a food market, has the benefit of an adjacent flea market, which may very well help to attract its high number of daily customers. Findlay Market also has a high number of daily customers, which helps its sustainability. As an indoor and outdoor market, Findlay has higher operating and management costs than a market like RFK Stadium, and thus must operate more days a week to succeed.

## Market Trade Areas and Sustainability

One of the key findings of the research that affects the sustainability of markets is critical mass. Customers shopping at the market were asked their home zip codes and these were plotted on GIS maps (see Appendix B). The exception was VEND, which had too few customers to survey. The results showed that East New York, with 16 vendors, is drawing mostly from the immediate neighborhood, while other, larger markets are drawing from up to 5 to 7 miles away. Clearly, a strategy for a successful market in a low-income neighborhood is to make sure that it draws from both inside and outside the neighborhood.

To understand the implications of attracting from a broader trade area, the aggregated income of the communities within a one-half and three-mile radii was compared. Just drawing from a three-mile radius drastically increases the aggregate income. Moreover, the ethnic mix becomes more diverse with a larger draw. Thus from an economic and a social point of view, markets that draw from a wider area have a larger potential for success than one that draws from a narrow area.

One final point related to markets in low-income communities must be made: Both walkability and/or substantial access to parking are key factors in the success of the market. The markets in the three densest neighborhoods in our survey – Chinatown, East New York, and Berkeley – had the highest number of customers walking to the market (40.5%, 38.1%, and 27.8%, respectively). This may reflect both the low



car-ownership rates in those neighborhoods, as well as the markets' proximity to their homes. Equally, if not more critical to both the Chinatown and Berkeley markets' success though, is their immediate access to large-scale parking lots: Indeed, 46.6% of the Night Market's customers drive, as do 60.8% of Berkeley's customers. Without those driving customers, both markets would not fare nearly as well as they do. Similarly, the success of the RFK Market hinges on access to the stadium's parking lots, allowing the 92.9% of its customers who drive to buy bulk amounts of produce. The rule here seems to be: If you provide parking, more people will come.

Of considerably less importance, but still crucial for customers in low-income communities, is access to transit. The highest transit riderships came in two of the poorest neighborhoods of our case studies: East New York, with 21% ridership, and El Faro, with 14% ridership. These numbers were surely facilitated by the markets' stone's-throw proximity to bus and subway lines. Chinatown came in with the third highest transit ridership at 12.2%. Interestingly, the one market (Berkeley Flea Market) located at a transit station had a low ridership of customers arriving by train (6.3%). This is probably due to the commuter nature of San Francisco's BART system, and that the market is operated on weekends, when abundant parking is available at the station.

## Neighborhood and Community Benefits

### How Can Public Markets Be Viewed as a More Important Component of a Broader Civic Agenda?

To address this key question, PPS and Partners considered how to better understand the current dynamics of public markets, as well as looked to the future to create a new approach for public spaces, markets, and social integration and economic mobility – identifying opportunities and potential implementation strategies along the way. To learn more about the present circumstances of markets and to reflect on a new paradigm, PPS asked market customers questions about how they used the adjacent neighborhood on market and non-market days. More important, however, Partners and PPS conducted four brainstorming sessions in different and diverse U.S. regions to test the concept that public markets can be linked to broader community efforts at social integration and upward mobility.

## Research Results

It has already been shown that markets are highly valued as civic places that bring people together. On a more specific level of economic impact, 60% of customers surveyed said they had or would visit other stores in the area (on the day surveyed at the market); of that 60%, another 60% said that they visited those stores only on market days. Overall then, public markets can thus be seen to support nearby

businesses. A striking example of this is the 88% of customers at the Chinatown Night Market who visited other stores in the area, and the 59% of those that did so only on market days. The Night Market has clearly succeeded in achieving its primary goal of boosting Chinatown's local economy. Further evidence of the boost markets can give came in an unsolicited response to the question of the market's greatest benefit to the community: 13.7% of overall customers cited its positive effect on the local economy. Tellingly, 26.5 % of Chinatown's customers responded accordingly.

Another interesting model to consider in regard to supporting the community lies in the Berkeley Flea Market, one of only two profitable markets in our case studies. Profits from the market have been rolled into the seven non-profit community organizations that make up its sponsor, from Food-Not-Bombs to the Berkeley Women's Health Center.

## The Workshop Process

The sites for the workshop sessions were New York, Los Angeles, Memphis, and Washington, D.C. They were selected based upon geographic and population diversity, and the ability to gather a range of community constituents such as public space advocates, food security organizations, market sponsors, and vendors, as well as individuals and organizations such as affordable housing advocates, civil rights leaders, faith-based leaders, community intermediaries, etc.

In Los Angeles and Memphis, a local individual known by the project organizers was asked to assist with the workshops. The duties of this task ranged from identifying a venue to suggesting workshop participants. In New York and Washington, Partners or PPS took on this task. Participants at all sites spent a half-day talking, with representatives from PPS and Partners guiding the discussion.

The agenda began with a slide presentation that highlighted the value and diversity of markets. The presentation was fine-tuned to each location. Following the visual presentation, there was an informal discussion focused on the needs of markets, followed by a vision of how those needs could be met in new and innovative ways.

Although the Washington, D.C, workshop adhered to this format, the participants at the event were representatives of national organizations that potentially could benefit from or partner with local market efforts. The turnout at this meeting was significantly lower than expected. PPS and Partners believe this was the result of a lack of awareness of the multiple benefits of markets. To compensate for the low turnout, interviews were undertaken with selected individuals who felt that their constituent agendas were not relevant to public markets. When the full range of activities of markets was explained, all interviewees understood the linkages and agreed that, with further discussion, they could bring the issue of public markets to

their constituents. This reinforces one of the most often repeated recommendations—the need for broad public education.

Two workshops were held in New York City, both in conjunction with the Great Markets, Great Cities Conference that took place on Nov. 9-11. The first workshop was convened July 19, 2002, and queried individuals from local markets, interested nonprofits, and others primarily on input to the conference. However, during the course of this discussion, many of the issues that public markets face across the country were brought forward.

The second convening was held during the conference. It consisted of a short lunch discussion on the needs and issues of public markets. Valuable information was derived from a “homework assignment” given to participants. This assignment asked each person to comment on the research, policy, and practice needs relating to public markets and to discuss the next steps for forming an “association” targeted to markets.

## Workshop Results

The results of the forums were quite different, depending on the audience and geographic locale. The main points from each workshop are summarized below. In addition, the results of the New York “homework assignment” are included in the appendices.

### LOS ANGELES

Attendees were primarily individuals working with markets, representing a combination of market managers, public officials, and leaders of community-based organizations. Their recommendations were:

#### **Develop new strategic models for the long term sustainability of markets.**

- Put the market in a larger economic context in a community, broadening the base of support for ongoing management and utilizing it more strategically for economic development.
- Recognize the social benefits that markets bring to public spaces and that should be sustained by a variety of partners: markets can be community institutions like libraries.
- Think about a 20-year plan – not a 2 year plan – for sustainability, recognizing that it may take a long time to get a market up and running.
- Involve new partners – hospitals, transit agencies, churches, universities (business schools, architecture schools, etc.) – in the sponsorship and start-up of markets
- Find ways to better involve traditional partners (like redevelopment agencies)

- Cooperate on common market costs and concerns (insurance, benefits, health codes, etc.) that affect many markets throughout a region.
- Recognize that the factors that make good markets may not always be transferable: What works in one place may not work in another.

**Develop more effective business plans for markets at the very outset, recognizing that markets in underserved areas are extremely difficult to get started and sustain.**

- Establish a new “bottom line” for these kinds of markets that may not be just financial; however, individual vendors must be “successful” if markets are to be sustainable.
- Analyze the buying habits of people who live in the neighborhood and what would attract them to a market.
- Consider how the market can draw customers from outside the immediate area to improve its economic base. Consider how parking is provided and maximize use of underutilized parking lots on weekends: In L.A., parking is a factor in determining the ultimate draw for a market. Security is also an issue.
- Develop better consumers, such as increase interest in buying fresh produce by working with schools, educating parents, etc.
- Consider alternative forms of markets, i.e., a certified farmers market food truck.
- Expand the marketing of markets to improve their draw.

## **MEMPHIS**

Attendees were primarily individuals working at the neighborhood level, including many CDC’s. While there is a market in Memphis, it is still fledgling. Their recommendations were:

**Create a collaborative process to guide the development of markets in Memphis, both at a central location and with satellites at the neighborhood level.**

- Identify a broad base of potential collaborators, recognizing that a market is a good way to bring diverse neighborhoods together for the good of all of Memphis.
- Identify unusual partners (vo-tech schools, neighborhood clinics).
- Consider how such a system of markets could be developed so that there is a true sharing of benefits and resources.
- Organize regular statewide meetings of all the organizations dealing with farmers.
- Organize a weeklong workshop of all players to hammer out the issues and details.

**Develop a strong argument for creating markets, noting the benefits it could bring to the city.**



- Connect the markets to the goals of Memphis' growing and increasingly diverse population and open up doors of communications between different cultural and ethnic groups.
- Connect the markets to neighborhood revitalization efforts.
- Consider using Ford money to create "civic value" – but allow each locality to define what that civic value should be.

**Start the process with sound technical assistance.**

- Address obstacles to markets (such as regulations and codes, insurance, permits, etc.).
- Identify the feasible forms of markets (open air vs. a market hall) and financing options, including the potential to provide incentives for private developers.
- Conduct market studies, economic feasibility analyses, planning, etc.
- Start with an open-air market as a pilot test.
- Work with local producers and entrepreneurs to figure out the best plans for them.

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Invitees were mainly representatives of national organizations. Due to poor turnout, Partners for Livable Communities is following up with individual meetings. However, some initial ideas were discussed:

**Develop a national public education campaign to build awareness and develop more local constituencies for public markets.**

**Create an argument for markets as a tool for systemic change.**

**Use national organizations as a resource to expand existing activities and develop new resources for public markets:**

- Develop a public market tool box (model leases, layouts, etc.) that can make it easier to develop a market; utilize skills that national organizations (NCCED, NRC-Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, and AIA) have already and could be adapted for public markets.
- Utilize national organizations on specific activities, such as:
- AIA: Hold a design competition to give examples of how temporarily to adapt public space for use by public markets in a low-cost way.
- NRC: Expand existing Neighborhood Reinvestment Training Institute course on public markets.

**Create new sources of capital, funding, technical assistance, and investment.**

- Explore how and why foundations could use Program Related Investments (PRI's) for markets.
- Expand Nonprofit Financing Fund.

The “Future Directions” section of this report (see below), incorporates the findings of these regional sessions, and places them in the context of a potential larger national initiative.

# Conclusion

## Public Markets as a Vehicle for Social Integration and Upward Mobility

**Creating a successful public market involves much more than creating a successful commercial enterprise.** The social and econom-

ic goals of public markets are intertwined in a way unlike those of any other civic institution or commercial entity. While the two goals are certainly compatible, there is a balance that must be maintained over time if public markets are to succeed on both counts.

As this report has documented, there are numerous examples of public markets that have failed either by relinquishing their social goals and becoming purely commercial, or by allowing the social goals to overwhelm the economic ones and force a closing. Many public markets struggle for years to find the right balance; one of the objectives of this study was to identify the conditions necessary to achieve and maintain this balance.

Clearly, it is the economic activity itself, and low barriers to entry that make upward mobility available to individual vendors and their families. As an added benefit, the opportunity is often in their own neighborhoods and requires little other than an entrepreneurial attitude. In other words, the vendors' success depends on their ability as merchants to create a profit (and depends as well, of course, on the survival of the market as an overall economic enterprise). In this regard, a public market is not different from any other private business enterprise. Here, economic and social benefits are closely related, but it seems clear that the governing factor is the economic one. Because individual business vendors can't realistically expect to be subsidized for long, if at all, they must also have the opportunity to make it on their own.

Social integration, on the other hand, is related to economic success in a different way. It depends to a much greater extent on the market functioning as a successful public space – a “place” where people come not only to shop, but also to meet others, “hang out,” and enjoy the overall ambiance and excitement of the space. The “place” quality is not necessary for the market to succeed economically if it can attract customers based on product or price alone (although a “sense of place” can certainly help attract the necessary customers). A sense of place is necessary, however, if meaningful social integration (of various ages, occupations, ethnicities, etc.) is to occur. It is also, as we have discovered, important for the vendors, creating an informal support network that helps with the start-up of their businesses.

A useful distinction in identifying these conditions is the distinction between an “anchor” and a “magnet.” “Anchor” is used here in the same way that retail developers use it: a large store that draws shoppers, whose business smaller stores then benefit from – i.e. the department stores that anchor either end of a mall, or the supermarket that anchors a strip shopping center. A public market as a whole must be an anchor in this retail sense in order to attract enough shoppers for economic success. It must serve the same purpose as the shopping mall anchor in supporting nearby enterprises.

A “magnet,” on the other hand, attracts for other, non-commercial reasons – it is a civic institution like a library or a town hall; it could be a museum or a transit stop. Or it could be a “sense of place” that inheres in the market itself and that could be built in from the beginning – that same quality that is a prerequisite for social integration. To achieve such integration, the public market must be a magnet as well as an anchor.

One would think, for example, that “place” must have some relationship to the design and physical features of the market, the management of the market, or to the “location” beyond what is required for economic success – and indeed it does. The sense of place that supports the social integration goal requires enough square footage in excess of that required only for selling to create a successful public space. Beyond that, the public space must be planned and designed in much the way that PPS works with communities already to include the elements of a good place: access and linkages, uses and activities, comfort and image, and sociability.

In addition, the management of the market must be supportive of active public space management, on which the success of the “place” quality could rise or fall. The “place” must be programmed and publicized, and be maintained parallel the more the space is used by the public, the more it will require. These conditions are to be expected and should be provided for, either by incorporating these duties into the management team for the market (while not losing the expertise and attention that the market itself requires), or by providing an additional management entity to perform them. The public space should not be treated as an expendable frill that will be the first thing cut in tight economic periods.



# Future Directions

## Research, Policy, & Practice

From the activities of Phase I, PPS and Partners have identified five key ways to enhance public markets as vehicles of social integration and upward mobility. Moreover, there is great opportunity to expand the recognition of public markets as more important civic institutions, which are also more financially stable and sustainable.

### 1. Create and Support New Models of Public Markets

The research was successful in identifying and analyzing a range of public markets about which very little information was previously known. Earlier research by PPS and others had focused mainly on larger, central markets in downtown locations – not markets in lower-income communities with the ethnic diversity represented by the markets of this research.

There are numerous and wide-ranging lessons from this research for communities seeking to start markets. For example, the degree to which more-successful markets draw from a larger trade area – while serving local needs – was surprising, and suggests that communities should have a broader vision of what they are trying to achieve. The key components of economic success for a small retail business are well known: product, price, good marketing, lean professional management, scale fitting its trade area, and, of course, “location, location, location.” If all of these are done right, the market can succeed, and vendors have a vehicle for upward mobility. But are there additional requirements for achieving the sense of place that fosters social integration?

Further analysis of the research is needed to refine the other lessons learned about specific successes and shortcomings of the studied markets in terms of their location, site design, layout, and management practices that are contributing to, or hindering, their success. PPS’s current work with the Kellogg Foundation will provide additional insight into markets sponsored by local food system advocates.

According to the research conducted, the need for sound technical support, training, and basic information at the outset of a new public market project is essential to create new models and expand public markets nationally. This should include strategies to reach out to local partners, such as health institutions, transit agencies, and others (see below). Moreover, there is very little information, outside of a few publications and occasional training programs that are available. PPS’s handbook, *Public Markets and Community Revitalization*, is out of date. However, the emergence of web technology offers particular advantages for keeping existing and start-up mar-

kets abreast of current trends and for exchanging ideas about the ever-changing nature of the public market movement.

Markets do need start-up funds to get going. Inadequate start-up funding can result not only in poor business decisions, but can also affect all aspects of a market's economic and social success. However, it does seem possible to kill a market enterprise with kindness by providing too much free money that softens the marketplace discipline that is required for economic success. Planning for markets should probably proceed as though no free money was available, and funding provided only for clearly identified start-up gaps – not long-term operations.

## 2. Strategically Support Vendor Upward Mobility

One of the most striking results of the research is the relatively low investment required of most public market vendors to start their businesses. Most vendors are doing it out of their own pockets, bypassing conventional lending sources. There may be a hidden benefit in this, as people who self-invest may be more likely to succeed than those who borrow other people's money. The motivation and stakes are higher, both of which may be essential ingredients of entrepreneurial success.

Again, there can be too much of a good thing. The VEND program, which basically provides everything for free to vendors and charges no rent, has long term sustainability challenges because there is no revenue coming in to support the market. On the other hand, research from other markets shows that more "serious" vendors – who are indeed raising their standards of living for themselves and their families – may require financial and/or technical assistance to transition from more "casual" status.

Getting local vendors into markets is often one of the most difficult jobs for market operators: Just because the market is funded and the site is secured, it is this aspect which really determines the likelihood of success. Only one or two of the markets researched included outreach to immigrants, low-income residents, and others on the margin. Such outreach is critical to increase the number of low-income vendors participating in markets in the future.

## 3. Broaden Understanding about the Potential of Public Markets: Move Markets into the Mainstream

Throughout the regional forum process, it was very apparent that public markets have not entered into the "business as usual" framework of organizations and public entities. The understanding of what public markets actually do does not extend beyond the obvious – purveyors of food and goods. While we expected that it would be a leap of faith for many to understand the less tangible attributes of markets

(community image, neutral gathering space, etc.), it was a bit of a surprise to learn that few individuals outside the market community understand the more material benefits that can be seen in many markets – nutrition and wellness information, job skill preparation, etc.

PPS and Partners liken this gap of understanding to the situation arts organizations faced ten years ago. At that time, the common phrase for the arts was “arts for arts’ sake.” Of course, nothing could have been further from the truth. Arts organizations across the country were –and are – revitalizing neighborhoods, serving at-risk youth, and contributing significantly to local economic development.

Partners took on the challenge of dispelling this misperception by convincing an unlikely ally to begin speaking out on the multiple benefits of arts and arts organizations. Raul Yzaguirre, president of the National Council of La Raza, discussed arts and culture in the following way:

*“I am a convert to this notion of marrying culture with social problems. In my mind, when I thought about culture, I always thought about portly ladies with horns on their heads singing in high voices. I envisioned long-haired activities for the leisure class.*

*“But I have come to realize that culture is even more important for understanding the traditions and history of minority and poor people. If you can involve relevant institutions, cultural and otherwise, in specific communities, you do enormous good in helping to transform what is often a negative self-concept into a positive self-concept.*

*“We have a responsibility to extend the investment in city infrastructure and emphasize that it should include museums, places of art, places of culture. They are as important as sewers, streets, or bridges because they are part of the fabric of the city.”*

Yzaguirre was among the first voices that helped moved arts and arts organizations out of the “frill” category and onto the table as a bread-and-butter issue. That speech was made more than ten years ago, and while the education efforts continue, the basic concept is now widely accepted. Now is the time to make public markets vital components of city infrastructure.

**The potential for public markets to move on to mainstream agendas is huge, but a full-scale and long-term advocacy and education campaign is necessary to accomplish the job.** The job that must be undertaken is to lead the way in gaining support for public markets from organizations that target equity, anti-gentrification, neighborhood stabilization, civil rights, economic and community development, and overlooked populations and from organizations with deeper pockets, such as transit

authorities, medical and health centers, universities and community colleges, libraries, redevelopment authorities, and faith-based institutions. Both of these new groups of partners must clearly see the benefits to their organizations and constituencies. This will not be easy.

There are many ways to undertake this task – ranging from a full-scale awareness campaign to a strategy of small but steady inroads to targeted organizations. As a first step, we recommend the latter approach. For example, given the research that has been conducted by this project, there is more than enough tantalizing information to meet with leaders from national organizations representing the causes mentioned above and to request speaking engagements at national conferences, articles in publications and newsletters, etc. There should also be a continuation of the workshops for specific constituencies, particularly the health and wellness sector, the faith community, and the public sector (including schools, libraries, and public officials).

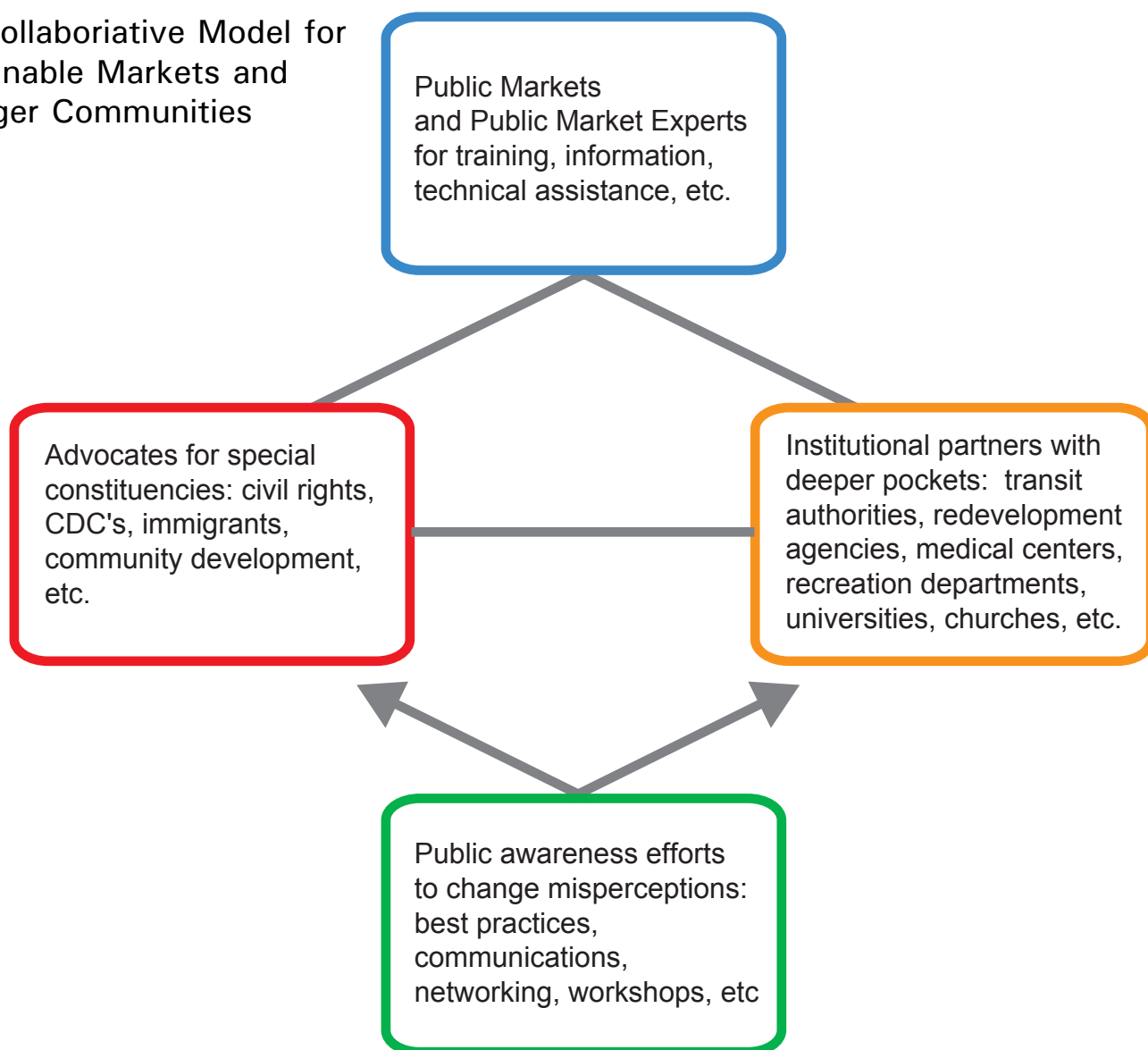
The most prevalent need that was voiced throughout the workshops was to develop an economic argument for public markets. Both Partners and PPS agree that having this information in hand is essential for involving non-traditional players. The economic argument will also show that public markets make a financial contribution that should not be ignored. The economic contribution of markets should be based upon a sound model that includes information on public markets as economic engines, as well as on markets' spin-off value. It would be helpful to undertake the development of the model with a well-known business school to give the study stronger credibility.

It is important to remember that mindsets do not change overnight. But once a few converts are made (such as Roy Priest, Executive Director of the National Council of Community Economic Development, who committed to the concept of public markets after attending the Washington, D.C. workshop), new partnerships can begin to be formed. Changing mindsets and stimulating unlikely, but potentially fruitful, collaborations also requires patient nurturing and diligent training.

Conceptualized below is a collaborative model of how Partners and PPS believe public markets can move out of the "markets-for-markets'-sake" category and into their rightful position as an important community player. Basically, it is a tripartite partnership between markets, representatives of the "hurting" community, and organizations with deeper pockets that could benefit from a partnership. The "pockets" may not always be filled with cash, but could include contributions of space, technical assistance, management, and training.



## The Collaborative Model for Sustainable Markets and Stronger Communities



#### 4. Recruit New Partners to Enhance Sustainability and Spin-Off Potential

The regional workshops identified the importance of developing new, more sustainable, models for public markets, as markets often fail to meet the social and economic expectations of vendors and operators. Market operators in Los Angeles identified access to effective business planning resources at the outset as a key need.

Moreover, participants felt that by broadening the base of support for ongoing management and by putting the market into a larger economic context, markets could become more sustainable. Potentially, some illustrative collaborative projects for markets in cities across the country are:

##### **Markets and Civic Squares**

The Chinatown Night Market that is held in Portsmouth Square, San Francisco, is an example of a market located in an economically distressed ethnic neighborhood that is serving both the economic development goals of the city and the community development goals of a neighborhood. The market is already located on an important public square, which is used by thousands of people every week.

Virtually every city is looking to enliven similar neighborhoods after dark to improve security, economic development, and the “excitement factor.” Cities have been moving in this direction for many years by stimulating housing, restaurants, movie theaters, and other forms of development that generate street activity. Developing civic squares where markets are part of a wide range of activities that might share management costs improves not only the sustainability of markets, but also the impact of the public space on the community.

##### **Partnerships with Schools**

The Farm-to-School initiative that is active in California and several other states is an excellent example of a partnership that could be expanded substantially with multiple spin-off benefits. This program introduces farm-fresh produce into the school cafeterias, thus offering an alternative to the normal fare. The requests for this program usually come from outside the school administration, including PTAs and concerned parents – people who are concerned about nutrition and the effects of increasing commercialism in schools. This project also develops future consumers among the children it serves and benefits the farmers and farmers markets, by creating a steady source of revenue for them.

The key to successful farm-to-school programs is effective partnerships, such as between the departments of education and agriculture, which can coordinate menu-planning and planting schedules. Some areas partner with the Department of Defense to broker and distribute the local food to schools.

This program could bring enormous benefits to schools in underserved neighborhoods where nutrition among young people is a serious public-health issue. It might be widened by encouraging farmers to bring additional produce to sell in school parking areas to parents and neighborhood residents. Some schools in California have combined the project with in-class study materials and/or curricula that allow students to grow and prepare food.

### **Vendors and Vending Ordinances**

This is another area that has been overlooked and underutilized. Most minority vendors across the country essentially operate illegally, selling their wares without permits on city streets or vacant lots. City ordinances are set up to prohibit this activity, and police sometimes arrest vendors and confiscate their merchandise. Other challenges are: the conflicts that often ensue between vendors and more-established retail business operators; the resulting demands for regulation; and the effects that regulation has on vendors themselves. Nevertheless, vending, when creatively undertaken, offers many possibilities to enliven spaces and provide micro-business opportunities to the economically disadvantaged, particularly new immigrants.

An example of an area that cries for vending regulation is Memphis, TN, where farmers drive into town and sell their produce from the back of trucks. Likely stopping places are neighborhoods without fresh food markets where there is a steady supply of willing customers. Simply gathering around the truck is a form of social exchange. In several meetings it was put forth that neighborhood truck vending was a culturally familiar form of enterprise that could be used effectively in certain situations. However this form of vending is generally not covered under local ordinances and is often unlawful. In the case of Memphis, truck vendors are constantly required by police to move, thereby disrupting the friendly gathering and supply of fresh produce.

The experience of Memphis' and other vending operations (i.e. VEND in L.A.) illustrates the need to research effective vending ordinances that benefit both communities and vendors, while meeting safety and zoning concerns. As a complement, it would be worthwhile to include information regarding the spin-off economic and social benefits of vending.

### **Medical and Wellness Centers**

Health and health-care related services are among the largest employers in the country. Cities and towns of all sizes usually have a medical facility of some sort that could potentially partner with a public market. There is a clear link between medical

centers and the good nutrition that markets provide. Markets could be set up in the parking lots of these centers (parking and space were recurring problems cited during the workshops). This would take advantage of both employees and visitors entering the premises, as well as serve the neighborhoods in which they are located. Some workshop participants mentioned that partnerships might be more fruitful with neighborhood clinics rather than large medical campuses. In either case, there is tremendous potential for these relationships and they should be explored further.

### **Markets at Transit Facilities**

Transit facilities are logical places for markets and, indeed, one of the case studies in this research was located at a BART station in Berkeley. Frequently, bus transfer stations and rail stations are desolate places, with little for passengers to do, even though thousands may be passing through daily. Often, station users are low-income and ethnically diverse riders who are totally transit-dependent. The Los Angeles MTA is very interested in pursuing some vacant lots next to heavily used transit stops as potential markets. In Corpus Christi, TX, PPS designed a downtown bus transfer center, which serves all lines in the city, to accommodate a market – but the market was never created. Bill Millar, director of the American Public Transportation Association, has offered to help get the word out to transit agencies if this is a direction that is desired.

### **Regional Collaborations**

The Memphis workshop presented an idea that has merit for other communities. Presently there is no major public market in Memphis, but there is interest in developing one. Our host in Memphis/Shelby County was the Riverfront Development Corporation (RDC), a non-profit public/private partnership with a mission to create a world-class riverfront along the Mississippi River. The RDC invited neighborhood civic leaders to the market meeting, nearly all of whom represented CDC's from economically distressed Memphis neighborhoods.

During the meeting, all of the neighborhood participants voiced the need and desire to have a public market located within their vicinity. Clearly, this was not possible. By the end of the workshop, they had agreed that rather than wrestle over which neighborhood would "win" the market, they would back a new plan that offered something for everyone: a market developed, financed, and implemented by the RDC on a Class A building site. By placing the market in a prime location and involving an organization with strong business skills and deep pockets, this plan would go a long way towards ensuring the financial viability of the market.

The neighborhood leaders asked that in exchange for their support, the market would be developed with input from the neighborhoods. Out of these discussions would emerge a "neighborhood compact" stating how the neighborhoods would relate to



the central market. These relationships might be stalls where neighborhood artists and vendors could sell their talents and wares, classes and/or training on business, entrepreneurship and other job skills, nutritional counseling, and so forth.

Even if the Memphis concept does not move ahead, the ideas that were generated here could have import for other communities.

## 5. Consider How Existing Markets Can Be a Resource – and Can Benefit from – a Broader Initiative

Existing market operators should not be left out of the picture. Even though they may not now be directly providing opportunities for or serving low-income communities, they have information and resources to share with new markets. Perhaps more important, their current operating success can provide a base to build programs that are directed to these communities. For example, the regional strategy identified in the Memphis workshop, where neighborhood concerns are linked in to a central market, could be adopted by existing markets.

It was not surprising to learn that individuals currently managing public markets are generally operating in isolation. Their jobs are demanding and time-consuming, with little extra time for networking either within or outside their own milieu. Throughout the workshop process, participants voiced a variety of needs for existing markets, ranging from management support (i.e. training, model leases) to cost-saving measures (i.e. a joint insurance program for public markets) to help promoting their markets within their own communities. Again, this brought up the idea of developing an interactive and flexible web-based information clearinghouse to serve all kinds of markets. A more complete list of needs is provided in the appendices.

